

REMARKS

Claims 25 to 41 are pending. Claims 1 to 24 are currently cancelled. Claim 25 is currently amended. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

OBJECTIONS

Claims 25-41 are objected to because in claim 1, lines 6-9, the features "the mating connector component allowing alignment of the first contact elements with mating second contact elements of the mating connector component prior to their making mechanical contact with each other" are unclear as to how the mating connector component could allow alignment of the first contact elements with mating second contact elements of the mating connector component prior to their making mechanical contact with each other" since such features are not clearly shown in the drawings.

Applicant submits that the features of claim 1, lines 6-9, are clearly shown in Fig. 4 of the attached drawing Replacement Sheets and reconsideration of claims 25-41 are requested.

§ 102 REJECTIONS

Claims 25-41 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Frantz (U.S. 5,219,301) (referred to hereinafter as "Frantz").

The Office Action essentially states in part that:

Insofar as the claims can be understood, as to claim 25, Frantz, Figs. 1-1 5 show a connector shell 6, 12,14 for a connector component of a connector arrangement for a wire cable 6 comprising: a housing 20 including first contact elements 30, the housing being provided with at least one first guiding element 18 having an axis for guiding the housing along a Frantz shows second guiding element 210 of a mating connector component 204 of the connector arrangement upon coupling with the mating connector component allowing alignment of the first contact elements with mating second contact elements of the mating connector component prior to their making mechanical contact with each other, and at least one fastening element 16 associated with the at least one first guiding element and substantially aligned with the axis of the at least one first guiding element for engagement with the second guiding element of the mating connector component.

Applicants respectfully submit that according to MPEP 2131 "[a] claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." (citing *Verdegall Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987).

Applicants have amended independent claim 25 to include the limitation that the at least one first guiding element forms a unitary structure with the housing.

This amendment is supported by the figures of the present specification which show that the first guiding element forms a one-piece construction with the housing.

Frantz does not disclose a guiding element that forms a unitary structure with the housing. Frantz describes a specific type of connector having a keying feature that allow for different types of connectors to only mate with a corresponding type of mating connector. The keying elements 184 are separate parts relative to the housing formed by upper and lower back shells 12,14 as can be seen best in Figs. 7 and 9. This is a requirement of the teaching of Frantz to enable various orientations of the keying elements so as to provide a number of different types of mating connectors (*see* Frantz at col. 1, lines 26-30 and col. 9, lines 26-48).

Furthermore, with regard to the claim element that the guiding elements allow alignment of the contact elements prior to their making mechanical contact, as can be seen, e.g., in Figs. 1 and 14 of Frantz, in the electrical connector assembly (2), the front edges of the keys (18), the connector receiving shell (6), and the mating portion (30) of terminals (27) are essentially coplanar. As can be seen, e.g., in Fig. 7 of Frantz, in the mating electrical connector assembly (204), the front edges of complementary keys (210) and mating connector (206) are also essentially coplanar. Therefore, when the two electrical connector assemblies (2, 204) are mated, the contact elements in the mating assemblies are brought into physical contact at essentially the same time that the mating keys (18, 210) are engaged such that the contact elements of the mating assemblies are not allowed to align before they make mechanical contact. Because of the essentially coplanar arrangement of the mating elements, the mating assemblies may be brought together askew such that a portion of the mating contact elements make physical contact before both sets of mating keys are engaged to a sufficient extent to align the contact elements. This can cause damage the contact elements such as stubbing, bending, or breaking.

In contrast to the foregoing, as can be seen in Fig. 4 of the present application, the guiding elements (24, 48) of the mating connector components engage with each other substantially before the contact elements (18, 51) engage, thereby allowing the contact elements of the mating connector components to align before they make mechanical contact.

Accordingly, Frantz does not describe every element of the claimed invention.

For these reasons, Applicants submit that the cited reference will not support a 102(b) rejection of the claims and request that the rejection be withdrawn.

In addition to the foregoing arguments, Applicants submit that a dependent claim should be considered allowable when its parent claim is allowed. *In re McCarn*, 101 USPQ 411 (CCPA 1954). Accordingly, provided the independent claims are allowed, all claims depending therefrom should also be allowed.

Based on the foregoing, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) is requested. Examination and reconsideration of the claims are requested. Allowance of the claims at an early date is solicited.

The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' attorney if the Examiner believes any remaining questions or issues could be resolved.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date

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